



**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY TO PROVIDE SANITARY FACILITIES AND PROTECTION FOR GIRLS IN THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY REGION

By Hon. Dr. Odette Nyiramilimo and adopted by the Assembly on 21st August 2013

PURSUANT to provisions of Articles 5 and 118 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community, Partner States undertake to cooperate in the field of health;

WHEREAS the Platform for Action developed at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women reaffirmed that all human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social, including the right to development are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and further expressed in the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights;

RE-AFFIRMING that the human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls is a priority for Governments and the United Nations and is essential for the advancement of women;

RECALLING both the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantee children's rights and uphold the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of gender;

AWARE THAT various conventions and linked action plans elaborate on women's sexual and reproductive rights but stop short of explicitly naming menstruation as one of the most stigmatized, silent and socially constructed silent curses that plague a third of the world's population throughout the developed and developing world;

AWARE THAT menstruation is the natural monthly occurrence of genital bleeding in healthy adolescent girls anytime between the ages of 8 and 16 until the period of pre-menopausal adult women, resulting in about 3000 days of a menstruation in an average woman's lifetime;

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT in different studies conducted in EAC countries, girls were found to be distressed or uncomfortable because of wearing of poor protective material during menstruation and this distracted them from full participation in class and girls are also afraid of being teased by both boys and girls in case of an accidental leak, or fearful due to some negative attitudes, myths or taboos about menstruation;

AWARE that school participation of girls, in particular in the region, lags far behind the participation of boys in the higher forms of primary (grade 4 and 5) and secondary school, absenteeism leading to poor academic performance and subsequent dropping out of school completely which is a major reason why gender disparities continue to persist despite deliberate governments efforts and policies that encourage girls to fully enjoy equal rights and continue their studies as boys of same age group;

COGNIZANT OF THE FACT THAT menstrual hygiene is fundamental to the dignity and wellbeing of women and girls and is an important part of the basic hygiene, sanitation and reproductive health services to which every woman and girl has a right to;

CONCERNED that poor menstrual hygiene in the East African Community Partner States is an insufficiently acknowledged issue and that poor girls often have no access to sanitary

products and, as a result of feared or embarrassment, irregularly attend classes, perform poorly, and eventually drop out of schools;

FURTHER CONCERNED that the low educational status of girls in turn limits women's acquisition of knowledge, skills and technology to compete equally with men for available opportunities, facilities and services in all sectors;

AWARE that many girls and women in EAC countries are still using clothing, tissue and cotton wool to contain menstrual flow, exposing them to health hazards while it is documented that in Kenya, tax exemption on sanitary pads pushed prices down leading to a much higher number of users;

FURTHER AWARE that menstrual pains, big flow of menses and lack of washing facilities and privacy in school toilets are the main causes of girls' absenteeism;

FURTHER AWARE that the monthly menstrual period does not affect school girls only but also creates obstacles for female employees, because when this occurs, they either report themselves sick or go home after work as fast as possible to avoid any public embarrassment;

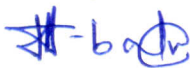
NOTING WITH APPRECIATION the decision of Kenya and Tanzania to abolish the high tax on sanitary pads and other ongoing initiatives to provide free sanitary pads to schoolgirls;

NOW THIS ASSEMBLY DO RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

1. That Partner States be urged to improve access, quality and affordability of sanitary pads in schools by abolishing tax imposed on sanitary napkins and by investing in production of low cost sanitary pads.

2. That the governments and private sector consider making school sanitation facilities more user-friendly for menstruating girls by building all-in-one latrines and bathing facilities so that girls do not have to walk between blocks; by providing piped water or storage tanks inside the blocks; constructing ample drainage channels; and ensuring that all cubicles have doors with locks for privacy.
3. That the Partner States do sensitize the people of East Africa about puberty and menstruation challenges by creating schooling environments which are comfortable and welcoming for menstruating girls in order to facilitate their attendance and use the *vehicle* of education to challenge the negative attitudes and lack of awareness.
4. That Partner States coordinate efforts to offer clean latrines and suitable places to change menstrual materials as well as promote unlimited access to counseling and guidance.
5. That Partner States promote access to sanitary pads and painkillers in all schools and distribute them to girls whenever needed.
6. That Partner States introduce reproductive health curriculum including menstruation hygiene management for schoolgirls in all grades of schooling, from pre-primary, primary to secondary for a better management of blood flow in a hygienic and discrete way.

CERTIFIED BY:



Alex Obatre
DEPUTY CLERK

DATE: 21 August 2013